technology encompassing wider process of social and economic change covering all stakeholders.

(iv) Basic and Strategic research in the frontier are of agricultural sciences.

The fields of research include production to comsumption system, sustainble rural livelihood improvement and basic and strategic research.

(d) The project is expected to be for a period of 6 years (01.07.2006 to 30.06.2012).

Skin diseases due to BT. Cotton

2426. SHRI B.J PANDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the seeds of Bt. Cotton have been causing allergic reactions among farmers;

(b) whether it is also a fact that as a result, the skin diseases among the farmers have assumed an alarming situation in certain regions of the country; and

(c) if so, the action plan to address this issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) There are no complaints on Bt. Cotton causing allergic reactions among the farmers. Further, Bt. Cotton was tested for its allergic reactions in Brown Norway Rats and found to be non-allergenic.

(c) Does not arise.

Bollworm disease problem

2427. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that premature release of Bt. Cotton varieties led to failure of cotton crops in South India, leading the farmers of cotton crops to the brink of suicide;

(b) whether it is also a fact that entomologists have sounded a grave warning on the scourge of the American Bollworm;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the cautionary measures taken by Government in this matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in the Ministry of Environment & Forests, has so far approved 20 Bt. Cotton hybrids for commercial release on the basis of data generated from the bio-safety studies, efficacy of the introduced trait and agronomic performance of the hybrid/variety for a particular zone on a case by case basis. A rigorous evaluation process is followed by the GEAC while approving various Bt. Cotton hybrids for release. Therefore, the question of premature release of Bt. Cotton hybrids does not arise.

(b) to (d) The findings of the three year study presented by Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur to the GEAC indicate that there has been no development of resistance of Bt. gene and there are no reports from entomologists on the scourge of the American Bollworm. Farmers have been advised to follow the refugia of non-Bt. Cotton while cultivating the Bt. Cotton hybrids.

Economic conditions of farmers

†2438. SHRI LAXMINARAYAN SHARMA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of small farmers in the country is maximum;

(b) whether the economic condition of farmers is deteriorating as the agriculture work does not remain profitable now;

(c) whether Government are further deteriorating their conditions by importing wheat and other agriculture items; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) According to the Agriculture Census of 1995-96, the number of operational holdings operated by various categories of farmers is as under:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.